

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

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Dear Dr Lederberg,

I am sorry to be so late in answering your kind letter of 28 January. It is an honour for me that you should notice my London University lecture "Old plagues in the jet age" and I am sending a
... reprint of the text published in the Chronicle. I have not written anything else on the same subject. In fact, what happened was that one of our former colleagues, who is now on the staff of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, knowing my views on the increasing risk of transmission of communicable diseases through modern means of transport, suggested to the University of London that
... I should be invited to speak on the subject. A paper by Raska, also published in the Chronicle four years ago and which I quoted in my lecture, is the only relevant reference to a WHO publication which I can find.

I was much interested in reading the reprints you sent to me. Undoubtedly, the most striking instance of the risks we are taking about is the so-called 'Marburg' virus. At the time I was preparing my lecture the data obtainable was too uncertain and I did not dare mention it but you are perfectly right in saying that, should the contamination have occurred within a population at large, e.g. at London airport, this could have led to a terrific pandemic. And, again, legislation and administrative measures embodied in the International Health Regulations would not have been of any use.

I am sorry you were unable to come for the meeting on our study on chemical and biological weapons but you know how your contribution was appreciated. I hope that an opportunity will present itself to meet you again.

With best regards

Yours sincerely,

Dr P. Dorolle
Deputy Director-General

P. DOROLLE